CHILDREN'S
RHYMES
OF
TRAVEL

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CHILDREN'S RHYMES OF TRAVEL

CHILDREN'S RHYMES OF TRAVEL

By MARJORIE WILSON

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DEDICATION

To Elaine Ingoldby, Peter Dakeyne, *and Other* Elaines & Peters

THIS little book was made for you
When travel-times shall seem
Like half-forgotten picture books
And patches of a dream.

You may remember shining decks
And gleaming fields of sea,
A tiny room that rolled about
And no more nursery tea.

And then a noisy, dusty town,
And travels in a train,
A house that hadn't any stairs,
But toys unpacked again.

At night a little muslin house
Built round you in your cot;
And all the street carts bullock carts—
And always you were hot.

And someone in white clinging robes,
Who, when you bumped your head,
Came swiftly in with bare brown feet,
And you were comforted.

So when the memory of those days
Is fading, you may find
This book will paint again for you
Those pictures of your mind.

THE GATES TO ENGLAND

THE great sea-roads to England
Have many little gates—
You saw some once—those bustling ports,
And winding ribbon straits;

And little foreign harbours
Tucked safely in from blasts;
And lighted dockyards, swaying ships,
And forests of straight masts.

And somewhere ever waiting
A slim grey Man of War,
To keep the peace for England,
Is never very far.

GIBRALTAR

GIBRALTAR is a gate we passed
From England to the East,
Which watches over sea and shore
Like some old shaggy beast.

But when he goes to sleep, and dark
Is settling on his heights,
He is a giant's palace with
A thousand window lights.

OUT AT SEA

QUITE the most exciting thing
I've seen
(*Almost* quite) wherever I have
been

Was a great HUGE whale!

I could see his back,
And the point of his tail.

He was a small mountain
With a high fountain.

He lay just below.
He will never know

How pleased I was to see him—how
excited,
And how most *fearfully* delighted.

FLYING FISH

SUPPOSE I were a whiting
and I only had one wish,
I'd use it very quickly
to become a flying fish.
I'm sure that whiting always
do very cold dull things;
And wouldn't it be wonderful
to have some little wings,
And skim and play and hurry
above the racing tide,
And see the great ships passing,
instead of staying inside.

PORT SAID

YOU might have felt a *tiny* scrap afraid
If you'd been wandering lonely in Port Said—
There are such *funny* people in the street
With clinging robes, and softly shuffling feet
Creeping from shadowed archways watching you,
Mumbling and chattering, and squabbling too.
You would have liked the conjurors, and the shops—
The funny way in which the shopman pops
Out of his door to come and let you know
With bows and smirks the things he has to show.
. . . You wouldn't like the dust, the buzzing flies,
The heat, or sand that sometimes stings your eyes.

I don't think *very* long you would have
stayed
If you had landed with me in Port Said.
The most exciting thing (to me at least)
Was that strange feeling, 'I have reached
the East.'

THE SUEZ CANAL

WHEN we got into the Suez Canal,
it was slow we went, oh slow,
And rolling away and away each
side, we saw the desert go.

Khaki and golden and golden and brown
with never a blade of green,
And white-robed Arab men walking by
like pictures that we had seen.

Then the sun went down in the crimson
sky behind the meadows of sand,
And the deepening shadows of coming
night passed over the dim gold land;

And here and there were little grey tents,
and only the desert around;
And we saw a man kneel down on the
shore, & touch his face to the ground.

And passing camels were sandy and gold;
and the night put on her cloak;
Then far in the East, to point our way, a
little white star awoke.

And solemnly, peacefully on we went over
the darkening tide,
And away and away the desert went, and
far and away each side.

ADEN

AT Aden, if your busy steamer stops,
You'll find perhaps that you'll have time to see
The little sun-baked streets and sleepy shops
Close-tucked about the dusty harbour quay.

And though maybe you only have one peep
Of Aden town before the steamer starts,
Bright pictures in your mind you'll always keep
Of stately camels drawing wooden carts;

And Arab men—some sleeping in the sun;
And ladies clothed all over but their eyes;
And little lazy houses clinging on
A bare black rock against the hot blue skies.

ON THE VOYAGE

(Staying up Late)

I SAW the phosphorus burn on the waves
Like the silver flowers of the sea;
And Someone came out on the shadowed deck
And played soft music to me.

The white stars came in the deepening sky,
And a crinkly path to the moon
Made a stream of gold, and the Someone sang
A little low song like a croon.

And I never spoke, and I sat quite still,
Pretending it hadn't grown late,
Though the sun had gone from the fields of day,
And night had climbed over the gate.

BOMBAY

IF you ever set out to reach Bombay,
You step on a boat one wonderful day,

And you journey over the vast blue plain
Of the sea that divides—and that joins
again,

Until one morning they say to you
(It really seems that it *can't* be true),

'That misty Island is called Bombay'. . .
And far faint domes and towers of grey

You can see—and low hills, dim and fair,
And you know that India 's over there.

And nearer and nearer the great docks
grow,
Where ships come laden and laden go.

. . . . . .

Oh! It 's Bombay streets that are dazzling bright,
That are staring hot, and dusty white,

With houses like palaces princely high,
And a palm-edged shore, and a cloudless sky;

And coloured clothes, and a chattering throng;
And bullock carts that dawdle along!

. . . . . .

And when night comes up, and the town grows still,
And the lights die out on Malabar Hill,

And moonlight rests on the dreaming domes,
On the quiet bazar, and the native homes,

You can hear the haunting tom-toms beat
Wild and faint in a far lost street.

And anchoring close by the harbour's side
Rocking to sleep, the little boats ride,

On every mast a sentinel light
(With the stars above to guard the night),

While the cool waves wash on the pebbled
sand,
And you dream you have entered fairy-
land.

FROM THE TRAIN

IN England from the train you see
Green fields and peaceful cows & sheep,
And lazy farmsteads racing by
In smoke-blue valleys quiet with sleep;

And primroses and meadow sweet,
And daisies white about the way;
And you can trace the paths that wind
To where the trees are snowed with may.

. . . . . .

In India from the stifling train
You see great rocky hills go by;
Brown miles of parched, unhappy grass,
And hot blue tracts of cloudless sky.

And slow indifferent bullocks too,
Well laden on the dusty roads—

. . . . . .

And then a station where you stop,
With brightly-coloured chattering crowds.

And rows and rows of tiny huts,
And young green rice, or sugar-cane,
And little dark-skinned boys and girls
Who wonder at the rumbling train.

And many scorching miles you go,
And sometimes weary days you spend
Gazing across that burning land
And dreaming of your journey's end.

BLUE JAY

(Poona)

BLUE Bird, Blue Bird,
Fluttering up high
Like a flash of happiness
Made of fallen sky!

Blue Bird, Blue Bird,
Come another day,
Happy things are hard to catch—
Quick to fly away.

THE LITTLE THINGS THAT HAPPEN

THE Little Things That Happen
Are tucked into your mind,
And come again to greet you
(Or most of them, you'll find)

Through many little doorways,
Of which you keep the keys,
They crowd into your thinking—
We call them Memories.

But some of them are rovers
And wander off and get
So lost, the keys grow rusty,
And that means—you forget.

But some stay ever near you;
You'll find they *never* rove—
The keys are always shining—
Those are the things you love.

THE LITTLE BOAT

I THINK I liked the very best
That time you came with me
All in amongst the harboured ships
On dimpled paths of sea.

When from our little wand'ring boat
Stretched roads of diamond light
To every rocking anchored ship,
And through the Eastern night

Came low strange calls: the gentle pat
And dripping of our oars,
The tumbling of a lazy tide
Against the sleepy shores.

There was a little breeze went by
Like wings of gossamer—
For happiness has tiny sounds
That you can sometimes hear.

SINGAPORE

WHEN you start for Singapore,
India to a low dim shore
Fades at last, then round you lie
Strange new worlds of sea and sky

Till at last some soft, warm night,
When no land is yet in sight,
Borne across the open seas
Come the sweetest scented breeze

From the flowers far away,
And the trees of green Malay.

. . . . . .

Then one morning very near
Comes the land. You're almost there.

Dotted in the blue are seen
Little islands, vivid green,
(Grown up round you in the night)
Glowing beaches warm and white—

Tiny broken washing waves
Tumbling in the palm-fringed caves . . .
Wharves & docks where great ships lie,
Some to sell, and some to buy . . .

Now a hurrying wonder town,
Yellow faces, faces brown,
Dresses green and red and blue,
Rows of rickshas wanting you;

Clean white buildings tall and fine,
Tiny stalls where people dine—
Funny curried food to eat
With chopsticks sitting in the street,

Nothing like you've seen before,
But—oh! it's hot in Singapore!

PENANG

(The Prince of Wales's Island)

THE Prince of Wales's Island town
is beautiful and clean,
With little houses coloured bright
with blue or pink or green.

Its shape is like a floating cloak
that's trimmed with diamond lights,
And bears and tigers prowl about
upon its jungled heights

And Chinamen in shady hats,
with bare and shuffling feet,
Will pop you in a grown-up pram,
and run you down the street.

The palm-trees thick with coconuts
stand straight against the sky
In rows and rows a million strong,
like armies marching by,

And there are birds and butterflies
far more than I could tell,
And betel nuts, and nutmeg trees,
and many fruits as well.

The native men go out with cups
to where the rubber grows,
To scrape the bark of every tree
and catch it as it flows

(They pour it into bigger pots,
and hang it up to dry,
And send it home to make the things
that every day we buy).

And hurtling down you often see
great strong white sheets of rain—
But soon the sun glows fierce and hot,
and bakes things up again.

And when the kinder night-time comes,
it brings a cooling breeze,
And fire-flies move like sprinkled stars
which tangle in the trees.

RUBBER

D'YOU remember the rubber-fields,
And how you used to see
The cups to catch the rubber in
Tied on to every tree?

And you would watch it flowing in,
And coolies walking round
To scrape the bark with curving knives
And weed the hard-baked ground.

And up against the sky above
The noise the monkeys made?
And the black cobra once you saw
Who scurried off—afraid?

D'you remember the factory—
The great big pots in rows,
And the creamy rubber poured inside
Brought straight from where it grows? . . .

You won't forget the piercing sun,
How thirsty, too, you got!
And how so often people said,
'*How hot it is! How hot!*'

THE JUNGLE TREES

THE golden trees of England
They dance on every hill.
The giants of the jungle
Are terrible and still.

The trees that live in England
They wave their arms about,
And little paths of greeting
Run gaily in and out.

But trees that make the jungle
Are fortified and great;
And he shall find no welcome
Who enters by their gate.

And I have seen them watching,
And I have heard them say,
'Our beasts are fierce and hungry,
And tangled is the way;

'And when behind our branches
Burns out the sunset flame,
No wanderer who ventures
Returns the way he came.

'Go back where softer sunlight
Its sprinkled shadow spills—
Where elm and fir are holding
High welcome on the hills.'

To J. C. W.

TRAVEL days come back to me
When I went to you.
Sometimes there's a flaming sun
Dipping in the blue,

And a rippling water-path
Down the way we'd come—
(Footprints of our hurrying ship
Pointing back to home).

Weird and wailing cries and chants
I can hear again,
With the tomtoms all the night
Down your little lane.

Sometimes there's a travelling moon
Through the rubber-trees,
Touching on the jungle's fringe,
Grim with mysteries.

Up above the Southern Cross
Silver in the skies;
And a little night-black tree,
Lit by fire-flies.

Then in rickshas—you and I—
(When the sun is down)
Go exploring once again
Through the lighted town.

TAMIL COOLIE MOTHER TO HER CHILDREN

'YOU mustn't wander to the shore
Upon your small bare feet,
Or Mr Croc. might see you come
And find you good to eat.

'Be careful through the rubber-trees
About the way you take,
In case a fallen twig turn out
To be a wriggley snake.

'Don't play beneath the beating sun
For very long by day,
And when the sun is going down
Don't go the jungle way.

'But eat your rice, and say big prayers,
And do as you are told;
Then you shall have some clothes to wear
One day when you are old.'

MUD-FISH

'LITTLE brother mud-fish,
Let 's come out and play—
Those three nasty white dogs
Just across the way,
May be chasin' lizards,
As they're late to-day.

'Brother frogs are singin',
Jungle 's wakin' soon;
I can hear mosquitoes
Startin' up a tune.
Monkey 's gettin' chatty . . .
P'raps there'll be a moon.

'Though we're only mud-fish,
We are swift and slim,
Quicker than those white dogs
We can dart and swim.
Man may think Dog clever,
We can outwit him.

'We don't see mud only
With our mud-fish eyes,
Mirrored in our puddles
We have seen the skies—
Known the stars of heaven
In the fire-flies.'

THE LOTUS FLOWERS

(Malay)

WE found a little shadowed wood,
And all alone, and quiet, and good,
There blossomed through the hot still hours,
In a deep pond—some Lotus flowers.

I thought that if we hadn't come
Along that way so far from home,
And neither you nor I had seen
That trembling pink amongst the green,

They would have lived and died alone,
And no-one ever would have known
How glorious they looked—how fair—
Deep-hidden in the shadows there.

AMAH

SHE has known me all my life—
Taught me how to walk.
She has got a funny name,
And a funny talk.

She has rows of golden teeth
And a golden smile.
She says, 'Go bed kick-er-ly . . .
Velly naughty chile.'

MALAY LULLABY

HUSH you! Go to sleep, the Eye of Day[1]
Is closed, so close yours too, nor run away.

The tiger wakes, and goes to seek his meat—
And soft and silent are the panther's feet;

Nor could you see the python curled around
Close to your feet. Or sliding on the ground

The night-black cobra. So go not away,
But closer creep until the eye of day

Once more shall open, when his light shall show
Amongst the rubber fields, the way to go.

[1] 'Eye of Day' is the Malay word for the sun.

FAR OFF

AH far! So far! How well I know,
In Devon land the cool moors go,
With primrose valleys cuddling low.

And sprinkled on her sheltering height
Each little twinkling Torquay light
Makes jewels on the sea at night.

'OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY'

SHOULD the whisper fall on your
ears one day
'Come over the hills and far away,'
You shall arise and obey the call . . .

AH,

Come away Peter . . .
Come away Paul . . .

For the world is great: there 's much to
be seen,
And you'll just be fretting until you've
been . . .
Your home will become a prison wall,

SO,

Fly away Peter!
Fly away Paul!

But when you remember there waits for
you
The simple things which are always the
true;
And coming home is the best of all—

THEN,

Come again Peter!
Come again Paul!

THROUGH THE PORTHOLE

(At Night)

WHEN I went to bed at night,
Then my porthole was a frame:
If I watched a little while,
I would find that pictures came.

Once I saw the mast-head light
Of a far-off passing ship:
On the rolling splashing sea
I could see it rise and dip.

In the great dark sky above
Stars were scattered everywhere.
Ships, I thought, were just like stars
As I lay and watched them there.

For a world is every star
In a heaven of its own:
Every ship a little world
Out upon the sea alone.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

BURNING upon some hidden shore
Across the sea one night
('A little reef,' the Captain said,)
We saw a shining light.

He said there was a lighthouse there
Where, lonely in the sea,
Men lived to guard that moving light,
And trim the lamp for me.

For me, for him, for every ship
That passes by that way.
I thought it must be strange and quiet
To be there every day.

They have no shops, no fields, no streets;
No whispering sound of trees,
But always shouting at their feet
The great voice of the seas.

And when we sleep at night they wake,
And over every wave
They send that straight strong arm of light
Stretched like a rope to save.

MOUNT LAVINIA

(Colombo)

WHEN we went through Colombo's town,
We found the broken cliffs go down
To meet the wild wave-beaten shore,
And there I watched an artist draw.

With one strong curve the cliffs he drew;
A dozen more, and palm-trees grew.
He sketched the sunlight on the sea,
And made the picture all for me.

MESSINA

UNDER the dawn-blue sky, awaiting day,
Walled by dim sleeping hills,
Messina lay;

And blue the veil of morning mist she wore;
And in the houses huddled by the shore

Like little earth-stars, golden windows gleamed
With early lights, and sleeping Etna seemed

Wrapped in a gentle dream (as we passed by),
Touched by the breaking gold across the sky.

VENICE

OH Venice Town! . . . In Venice Town
St Mark's is shining gold;
The sails are flaming red and brown,
The bridges grey and old.

For like a jewel is she set
In silver water-ways,
With clear blue nights, star-lit and cool;
And lazy laughing days.

Where many a secret cobbled street
Will clamber off and hide;
And old splashed houses dip their feet
Into the swaying tide.

There Robert Browning's house they show
Beside your passing boat
(Some day it may be you will know
And love the words he wrote

High in his little window there,
While gondolas dreamed by,
And domes of Venice, grand and fair,
Were golden in the sky).

NEAR HOME

I SAW the cliffs of England pass
As I was coming home.
Their heads were crowned with
golden grass,
And silver chains of foam

Made garlands for their snowy feet
And splashed against their gowns;
And here and there smoke-dimmed
and sweet
Were little English towns.

ENGLAND

THERE is a kingdom that I own
(You own that kingdom too),
And whiter than a pearl her cliffs,
Set round with water blue.

Her carpet is of ferny moss
And fringed with bending trees;
And you can plunge as bathers do
Amongst her bluebell seas.

Cool moon-lit scented primroses
Are spilt about her hills;
And in the hiding dells and dales
Are scattered daffodils.

And down in tree-green Somerset
The hills of Mendip climb,
While Hampshire's head is gold with gorse
Each Spring at crowning time.

And Derwent's silver water croons,
While London's traffic roars,
And Widdicombe and Manaton
Sleep cuddled in the moors . . .

And yours she is, and mine she is,
Her wand'ring Sussex Downs;
Her Yorkshire Wolds & Devon Coombes;
Her murky smoking towns,

And crowded streets (you love these least),
Her sea (you love this most) . . .
The little gleaming harbour-lights
That star her broken coast.

BILLY

BILLY is home again. Billy has come
From over the furthest seas.
He has watched the hurrying sun
climb down
To hide in the coconut trees.

For Billy set sail in a monster ship
Away to the land and back,
Where your daddy is 'Sahib,' and wears
white clothes,
And the nurse that you have is black.

He doesn't know much about bicycles,
Or of castles you build on the sand,
And if you should talk about pantomimes
He doesn't quite understand.

But he has been shown where the tigers
live;
He has heard the jackal's cry,
And Billy has seen how the monkeys swing
And the flying foxes fly.

And he has met lizards—and once a snake—
And he has been for walks in the dark,
But he hasn't yet seen an aeroplane,
Or sailed a boat in the Park.

THE POPPIES

(England)

IN Sussex once I saw the poppies go
Like scarlet soldiers, row on shining row

Across the hills; and where the cornland spreads
All feathery-gold below, they tossed their heads

And danced about, as if they didn't care
(Although they knew they had no business there).

I think the corn must like such lovely weeds
Strung through its hair, like strings of glistening beads.

MARTHA JONES

(England)

MARTHA Jones is very old,
Once I heard her say:
'There is always somethin' comes
Every blessed day.

'Though I'm dim about the eyes,
Bad about the feet,
Still there 's coal to make a fire;
Still there 's bread to eat.

'There 's the Springtime coming soon
With the daffodils,
And the little primrose flowers
Scattered on the hills.

'There are some to love me still,
And for me to love—
Though they most are waitin' there
Where it 's Spring above.

'There 's a little singin' bird
On my apple-tree . . .
There's a kettle singin' too.
God be thanked for tea!'

THE GRIZZLY BEAR

(England)

'I'M feelin' rather lonely now. The garden gate is open—
I'll pretender that I see a woolly bear
come crawlin' through.
Then I will take my little gun and see if I
can find him,
And will make his skin into a furry winter
coat for you.

I went into the garden, and pretended
that I hit him,
And killed him with a single shot as he
came creepin' through.
I never felt a bit afraid, though he was big
and grizzly—
I think he'll make a lovely coat if you'll
pretender too.

THE WANDERER

OUT by the headland the great ships ride,
I can watch them from the hill—
Yet down in the Devon Coombe I bide
With ever a wand'rer's will.

My father points to the crops new grown
And the farm that shall be mine,
But my heart's a'hunger for lands unknown,
My lips a'thirst for the brine.

My mother sews in the chimney nook
A linen smock for me;
My granny reads from the old worn Book,
And the little winds go free;

They whisper out in the harbour bar
And beckon across the corn,
But still I bide where my quiet folk are
In the house where I was born.

The little butterflies bring to mind
As they flit beside my plough
Dipping white sails a'slant in the wind
Or the gulls about a bow.

And nights when the valley holds no
sound
Save the quiet cropping sheep,
Swift in my dreams I am outward bound
With the ships that never sleep.

Like far-off music amidst my toil
Is the call that comes to me,
But yet I bide and furrow the soil
As the ships that plough the sea.

THE MAGICIAN

WHEN I was small a tall man came.
He took me by the hand,
And led me down the path into
The Undiscovered Land.

The secrets of the singing birds
At dawn at last I knew.
And what the wild flowers wrote amongst
The grass—and why it grew;

And why the little primrose lamps
Tuck down for us to find;
And why the stars have tiny roads
Between, that twist and wind.

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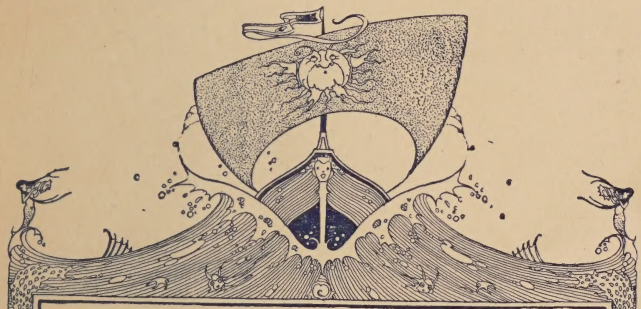
MARJORIE WILSON



This little book was made for you
When travel-times shall seem
Like half-forgotten picture books
And patches of a dream.